

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

DATE: April 10, 2007

CALLED TO ORDER: 5:32 p.m.

ADJOURNED: 6:23 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

ATTENDING MEMBERS

Angela Mansfield, Chair
Patrice Abdullah
Paul Bateman
Ginny Cain
Susie Day
Ryan Vaughn

ABSENT

Joanne Sanders

AGENDA

Quarterly Presentation from the Marion County Office of Family and Children

Rhonda Allen, Director

The Honorable Marilyn Moores, Juvenile Court Judge

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

The Community Affairs Committee of the City-County Council met on Tuesday, April 10, 2007. Chair Angela Mansfield called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m. with the following members present: Patrice Abdullallah, Paul Bateman, Ginny Cain, Susie Day and Ryan Vaughn. Absent was Joanne Sanders.

Quarterly Presentation from the Marion County Office of Family and Children

Rhonda Allen, Director

The Honorable Marilyn Moores, Juvenile Court Judge

Judge Moores introduced Rhonda Allen, the new Director of the Marion County Department of Child Services (DCS). Rhonda Allen, Director, DCS stated that she previously was the director of child services in Boone County and worked with them closely. Ms. Allen distributed a packet with information regarding the services provided by DCS.

{Clerk's Note: This packet, Exhibit A, is on file in the Clerk's office.}

Ms. Allen explained the Three Year Summary of First Quarter Expenditures sheet. She said that this summary highlights 2005, 2006 and 2007 first quarter expenditures and gives the amounts spent out of those line items each year. She also said that the sheet shows the reimbursements that were received. Ms. Allen stated that DCS did not receive their fund ledger back from the Auditors office in time to incorporate March 2007 expenditures into the spreadsheet. She said that for 2007 amount it is the actual expenditures from January and February and then an estimate of what the March expenditures will be.

{Clerk's Note: Paul Bateman arrived at 5:35 p.m.}

Chair Mansfield asked what is the reason for the blank line items. Ms. Allen stated that, for example, the Therapeutic Foster Homes line item, the State disposed of that line item and incorporated Therapeutic Foster Homes with Foster Homes. Ms. Allen stated that with Foster Parent Insurance and Medicaid Rehab Option, DCS has not incurred any expenses on those line items.

Councillor Cain asked if that was the reason for the huge increase from 2006 to 2007 in foster homes. Ms. Allen answered in the affirmative.

Councillor Abdullallah asked what the reason is for the blank line items under Interest on Loans from 2005 through 2007. Ms. Allen stated that from 2005 and 2006, she does not have an answer. She said that for 2007, there has not been a loan and is not sure if DCS has the amounts of the loan and what the interest is. Councillor Abdullallah stated that the Council did approve loans for DCS. Judge Moores stated that the loans were for 2006 and DCS is not privy to that information. Judge Moores stated that the Controller and Auditor have that information. Councillor Abdullallah asked if the amount should be part of the line item. Judge Moores answered in the affirmative, stating that if that information had been furnished to DCS, it would have been included. Councillor Abdullallah asked if the interest is included in the 2006 totals.

Judge Moores and Ms. Allen stated that they do not have an answer for that and will find out for Councillor Abdullah. Chair Mansfield stated that if she understands correctly, this spreadsheet just shows the first quarter comparison of the expenditures and seems to be consistent with 2005 and 2006.

Councillor Bateman stated that the Child Welfare Services seems to have doubled between 2006 and 2007. Ms. Allen stated that the Child Welfare Service line item is a State grant. She said that line item pays for prevention services such as Neighborhood Alliance for Child Service (NACS) and all four sectors of the community, and early intervention types of services will come out of that grant.

Ms. Allen stated that on the summary spreadsheet, the \$2.1 million that is encumbered is funds that were encumbered for 2006 services and DCS is taking funds from the 2006 budget to pay for the \$2.1 million. She said that in 2007 under the approved budget, it is listed as DCS spending \$100 million and in actuality; \$2.1 million was encumbered from 2006.

Councillor Abdullah stated that over the last couple of years, DCS expenditures have tripled. He asked if DCS anticipates any increase in the expenditures for children's services. Ms. Allen stated that she does not anticipate going over this year because what DCS has been funded is at its peak. She said the long term goal is less cases in the system, and that equates to less money being spent on children lingering in the system.

Chair Mansfield asked if the recent crime issues impact the need for child services. Ms. Allen stated that the crimes issues impact the need for early intervention for children. She said that the earlier DCS can engage families and provide services they need, the better the long term goal is to reduce crime.

Councillor Cain asked if the higher amount for the 2007 Child Welfare Service is a good thing since that is money going towards prevention services, it is and funded by state grant. Ms. Allen answered in the affirmative.

Councillor Abdullah asked what the city can do to help more families work towards keeping their children instead of losing them through accelerated laws. Judge Moores stated that the first thing is to do everything that the law requires not to remove the child. She said that previously the general practice was to remove the child, place him/her in foster care, and order the parents to get services. The courts and DCS have seen that this practice was not productive. Judge Moores stated that the law requires us to see what services can be in place so that the child will not be removed from the home. She stated that removal from the home is what triggers the adoption and safe families' federal requirements for that accelerated time frame. Judge Moores stated that now the child is only removed if serious injury to his/her health or mental well being is imminent.

Ms. Allen proceeded with the presentation going over the spreadsheet for the First Quarter 2007 (Children In Need of Services) CHINS and Juvenile Delinquent (JD) Estimated Expenditures, showing January and February 2007 expenditures and the estimated March

2007 expenditures. She said that the spreadsheet shows the actual breakdown of where the funds are. Councillor Cain asked if a JD is defined as over the age of 12. Judge Moores stated that JD is defined as a child who has committed an offence which would be a crime if they were an adult.

Ms. Allen discussed the three year summary, stating that this spreadsheet shows the number of children served at each line item and the amount of funds incurred. She said that in 2006, Institution cost for CHINS were \$21 million which roughly is about \$11,000 per child, and \$8 million was spent on 882 JDs which is about \$9,000 per child.

Councillor Vaughn stated that the number of CHINS cases varies within 100 every year but the cost seems to jump significantly from 2004 - 2006. He asked what accounted for that rise in cost. Ms. Allen stated that it depends on where the child is placed. She said that there are some institutions that DCS pays between \$150 and \$600 per day, so if there are more children in those high end placements for long term, there will be an increase in that institutional line item. She said that each year, typically those per diems are increased by three to five percent and that is an increase that the Indiana Department of Child Services allows.

Councillor Vaughn asked if reference to higher or lower end institutions, means the higher institutions are providing more services because some children need more services. Ms. Allen answered in the affirmative, stating that in the system, DCS tries to put children in the least restrictive setting possible. She stated that if that setting does not work, DCS has to increase to the next least restrictive setting for that child.

Chair Mansfield asked if this is reflecting the difference of approach on how to deal with children. She said that in the past, the approach might have been to not give the children as much care and these types of services. Judge Moores stated that it certainly is the case with juvenile delinquents in that the court is sending fewer and fewer children to the Department of Corrections (DOC) and is trying to assess these children to try and balance the best interest of the child with the safety of the community while remembering that they are still children.

Councillor Vaughn stated that fewer kids are being separated or incarcerated and more are receiving treatment. Judge Moores answered in the affirmative.

Councillor Cain asked with the CHINS cases how DCS determines that the child is a CHINS case. Judge Moores stated that first a petition is filed with the court, alleging that this child is in need of services based upon a child born addicted to drugs or has broken bones. She said that there is a fact finding trial where the parents are represented by counsel, if they wish, and the DCS case worker presents evidence and the court makes the determination whether that child or children are CHINS cases. She said that if they are determined to be CHINS, then a case plan for reunification of that family is drafted and is now done with the child and family team to hear from the family on the help that they need.

Councillor Bateman asked if there was a line item for caseworker training. Ms. Allen stated that the training is paid for by the State. She said that the caseworker salary, building expenses, and any administrative expenses are paid for by the State.

Ms. Allen stated that due to an overwhelming process of counting claims, one line item missing in the Three Year Summary of Expenditures is the Preservation line item. She said that is an area where DCS is expected to spend \$21 million dollars this year for the services that are provided for the families.

Ms. Allen referred to the Federal Reimbursements spreadsheet stating that over the years, DCS's federal reimbursements have climbed reaching a maximum of \$27.8 million in 2006. She said that 2006 reimbursements include the \$8.5 million in retroactive reimbursements. Ms. Allen said that the State hired a group called Secoya and they came in and looked at the last two years of cases to see if DCS has missed any reimbursements.

Councillor Vaughn asked if the contract with Secoya through the State is reoccurring every year to determine if there will be any reimbursements. Ms. Allen stated that Secoya is working at the State level on various other issues but until DCS has two years retroactive, Secoya will probably not do that intensive process. She said Secoya is not working with DCS on a daily basis. Ms. Allen stated that Secoya showed DCS how those reimbursements were missed and how DCS can improve the process, so hopefully those reimbursements will not be missed in the future. She said that she does anticipate seeing them in a couple of years just to make sure DCS did not miss anything.

Ms. Allen referred to the 2004-2007 Assigned Investigations spreadsheet, stating this graph gives an idea of where the peaks are with those investigations. She stated that every year in March and August, DCS will peak due to school being in session. Ms. Allen went over the 2004-2007 CHINS/Informal Adjustments, which is a contract to pay for and provide certain services to families. She said that this spreadsheet shows the amount of cases over time.

Ms. Allen referred to the Summary Page, which is information DCS has provided to the committee every year in the month of March and it shows the number of children in Residential, Foster, Own Home, and Relative Care. Ms. Allen stated that the "Other" line item is referred to children in hospitals or guardian homes. She stated that residential care is down in 2007 compared to March of 2005 and 2006. She said that foster care is about the same as it was in 2005 and there was a peak in 2006. Ms. Allen stated that relative care is where DCS has stayed stable. She said that ultimately, that is the best place for a child to be if they cannot be with their own parents.

Chair Mansfield thanked Ms. Allen and Judge Moores for their presentation.

With no further business pending, and upon motion duly made, the Community Affairs Committee of the City County Council was adjourned at 6:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Angela Mansfield, Chair
Community Affairs Committee

AM/law